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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



2022 WAS A COMPLICATED AND CONTRADICTIONARY YEAR. We were barely able to begin enjoying our lives and increased freedom after the regression of COVID-19 when the war in Ukraine started. Russia’s brutal aggression towards Ukraine was an attack towards us all. It touched Baltic communities both in their homelands and abroad very closely, in a very personal way. It has affected and determined our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We have searched for and found ways to contribute to Ukraine’s efforts and support them in the fight for humanity — both on an individual and community level. The energy and economic crises affect us all in one way or another.

Can I pull through and make it? Many have asked themselves. And then, activists and politicians remind us that the world needs saving from the impending climate catastrophe. “There are too many major worries at once!” , one would be inclined to protest. The weight of the world can truly bear down on you and make it seem like a burden under which strength drains, hope dwindles, and daily tasks seem mundane and pointless. But carrying on with these daily tasks helps us move forward and find an inner balance, one day at a time. And if your small tasks support values that are important to you and help those who have bigger worries than yourself, even if just a little, then you’ve already made the world better. So what to wish for the new year at this challenging time? I’ll borrow a thought from Dalai Lama: “Choose to be optimistic, it feels better.”

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Piret Noorhani

“STORIES OF WAR” COLLECTION CAMPAIGN

Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, various forms of media have broadcast the events in Ukraine as well as the quality and state of life of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia. However, a lesser degree of focus has been put on how the war has affected Estonians and what role Estonians have played overall in the war. Another question that needs to be posed is how this war has affected diaspora Estonians and their respective communities. There’s no doubt that the war in Ukraine has revived personal and familial memories for many Estonians from the era of the Second World War, the fears related to it, and the trauma of leaving

their homeland. With the upcoming collection campaign titled “Stories of War” from the Association of Estonian Life Stories and the Estonian Cultural History Archives (Estonian Literary Museum), we wish to collect stories related to the Ukrainian war from individuals belonging to various generations. VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada in Toronto is a partner for the collection campaign. When documenting your story, the following questions can be considered:

1. What do you remember from the beginning of the war?
2. How did the knowledge of the outbreak of the war affect your everyday life?
3. Do you discuss the war in your family? If so, what themes related to the war have come up as conversation topics?
4. Have you or a family member had personal connections to the war in Ukraine? If so, then what have these connections/experiences been?
5. Have you come into contact with Ukrainian refugees? If so, how?
6. What emotions have the war in Ukraine brought forth in you? Have they changed over the course of the war?
7. Does the war currently affect your everyday life? If so, how?

Stories can be written in both Estonian and English.

Please send your story to one of the following email addresses: elulood@kirmus.ee or piret.noorhani@vemu.ca
Deadline: December 31, 2023.

WINNER OF ARVED VIIRLAI LITERARY AWARD ANNOUNCED

On December 15th, the first Arved Viirlaid Literary Award was presented during the Kreutzwald Days at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. The winner is Lehte Hainsalu’s collection of poems titled “Valuvaba.”

The recipient of the award was chosen by the jury, which includes the following individuals: Tiina Kirss, Janika Kronberg, Sirje Olesk, Kaja Telmet, and Jaan Undusk. The award fund is funded



*Lehte Hainsalu and Janika Kronberg.
Photo: Alar Madisson*

by VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada. The amount awarded to the recipient is €1500.

VEMU established the literary award in honour of the 100th anniversary of Arved Viirlaid’s birth. The award is given out biennially on Viirlaid’s birthday, April 11th, to an outstanding fictional work that contains themes relating to Estonia and captures as well as conveys the essence of the country and its culture. Not in keeping with the timeline, the first award will be given out in December 2022. The initiator, Piret Noorhane, explains the necessity of the award with the following: “Arved Viirlaid is undoubtedly an important figure not only amongst Estonian-Canadian authors but also in all of diaspora Estonian literature. The hope is that through the creation of the award, some of Viirlaid’s own works can be brought back to the forefront. It was even more of a necessity to put focus on contemporary authors, who value Estonian statehood, culture and heritage within their works. For them, it’s not just a word or superficial political concept, it’s something that they’ve personally experienced and is close to their hearts”.

Through her lengthy and fruitful career, delving into various genres with her literary works, Lehte Hainsalu has become an embodiment of the Estonian life force. She has contributed through words and actions to the re-independence of Estonia, her signature is on our constitution. Just as she lived with her mother tongue throughout the years of occupation and helped it ring, her latest collection of poems “Valuvaba” (Painless) aids us in persevering and finding strength

BY SUPPORTING THE NGO BALTIC HERITAGE NETWORK, YOU ARE SUPPORTING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BALTIC PEOPLE ABROAD!

Your donation to the NGO Baltic Heritage Network supports:

- + the preservation of the cultural heritage of Baltic people abroad
- + the ability to make this material accessible through the portal balthernet.net
- + training of volunteers dedicated to preserving their own heritage and providing consulting services to community archives
- + the implementation of educational programs (seminars, summer schools, day trips, conferences)
- + creating awareness and popularizing the field

The success of our organization relies on the dedicated work of our volunteers; however, the implementation of a successful program requires financial resources. We have received these resources through the Estonian Compatriot’s Program and member fees. Your help is crucial in our efforts to perform our tasks and to reach larger audiences and organizations.

We welcome both one-time and ongoing donations. Any amount makes a difference!

The Non-Profit Association Baltic Heritage Network was founded in Tartu on January 11, 2008. NPA BaltHerNet was established to foster cooperation between national and private archives, museums, libraries, and institutions of research, public associations and organizations collecting and studying the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora. It aims to facilitate the preservation and research of the historically valuable cultural property of the Baltic diaspora, as well as to ensure accessibility of these materials to the public.

NPA BaltHerNet is also committed to the organising of conferences, seminars and workshops, and to developing and administrating the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

throughout the pandemic and through these dark, dreary winter months. Kaja Telmet, a representative of Estonian-Candian readers on the jury, explains the choice of the recipient of the award with the following: “Lehte Hainsalu’s simple verses and haikus about her lived experiences spoke to me and left a spark in my heart.” She refers to the poem “Pühajõuluõhtul mälestan lahkunuid” (On the Holy Christmas Eve, Remembering Those Who Have Passed):

*On the Holy Christmas Eve I remember
those who have passed,*

*hundreds upon hundreds upon
hundreds,*

*who I’ve walked alongside, who I’ve met
for a short while,*

who’ve left a spark in my heart.

*An idea planted in my mind or a stone in
my shoe,*

I remember both with a smirk.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF ESTONIA OPENED ITS FULL-TEXT SEARCH PLATFORM USING AI

On 18 October 2022, the National Archives opened its [full-text search platform](#) based on a software program called [Transkribus](#).

Transkribus allows anyone to teach their computer to ‘read’ historical documents by relying on machine reading. All that is needed is a reasonably accurately written text to train the computer. The more varied the handwriting in the sources, the larger the dataset required to train a working text recognition model.

In this web environment, you will find the following collections of sources:

- Birth metrics of Orthodox congregations 1838–1926
- Tartu City Council minutes 1902–1940
- Petitions for the Swedish Governor-General of Estonia 1630–1707

All the birth metrics of Orthodox churches preserved in the National Archives from the 1838 reform of metrics until 1926, when the obligation to keep civil status records in churches ended with the Family Law Act, have

been collected in this database. The birth metrics indicate the date of birth and baptism of the child, the name of the child, the names and origin of the parents, together with their status or profession, and the names of the godparents. Text recognition has been used to make searchable a child’s name and information related to their parents. All people baptised in the congregation, including converts, were recorded in the birth metric. The spelling of the name in the metric can, at times, differ greatly from the modern one, depending on the nationality of the clergyman or priest who kept the metrics. Thus, there are names written in both Estonian and Russian. Among place names, you can also find German-style variants of the name.

The Tartu City Council met for the first time in 1878 in accordance with the City Act established the year before. As a result, city governance became more democratic and transparent, with all taxpayers receiving the right to vote, although wealthy Baltic German landlords remained dominant at first. The City Council minutes perfectly illustrate the change in governance. A lively discussion between the city commissioners reveals the reasons for urban development and hints at other directions in which Tartu could have moved. The database contains minutes starting from 1902 when meetings of proceedings began to be recorded on a typewriter. The minutes from 1902 to 1917, when Tartu and the rest of Estonia were part of the Russian Empire, are in Russian. The minutes from 1918 to the 1940s were prepared in Estonian, with the majority from 1918 being in German due to the German occupation during World War I.

In the Governorate of Estonia or Northern Estonia, Swedish rule was established by the Livonian War in 1561. The rest of the territory of Estonia was conquered during the 17th century. The Swedish era in Estonia ended with their surrender to Russia in the Great Northern War in 1710. The King of Sweden was represented by the Governor-General, in whose hands civil, military and legal power was consolidated. It was also

his role to represent the province in the motherland of Sweden. As such, the Governor-General was a desired recipient of petitions. Accepting petitions and forwarding them to the correct instances for resolution was one of the most important tasks performed by the Governor’s office. Finally, the Governor-General approved the adopted decisions. Since not all the petitions’ records have been digitised, only a portion of the petitions from 1630–1707 can be found here.

Welcome to use the full-text search for the collections of the National Archives!

THE GREAT BALTIC ESCAPE – AND THE ARMADA OF BOATS THAT SAVED SO MANY

In the late summer of 1944, tens of thousands of Baltic people were compelled to flee their homelands. They fled in desperation with the intensifying war front in the Baltic lands and in fear of the pending terror of a Soviet reoccupation of their nations. Some fled via limited land routes, and several thousand crammed onto the last departing freighter ships. In Estonia, over 30,000 Estonians fled to the Baltic sea coast seeking passage to Sweden on boats large and small. Those fortunate to find space on boats would embark on a perilous journey - across the Baltic sea. Many boats capsized in the stormy seas; the invaders’ gunboats ruthlessly sank some boats. Several thousand perished at sea. Yet over 27,000, crammed on their small boats for two or more days and nights, survived the journey and landed on Swedish shores. They disembarked into an uncertain future but felt heaven-blessed for their deliverance. The escapees hoped that the war would soon come to an end and envisaged a return to their homeland and to their loved ones left behind. But this was not to be. The lives of those escapees were irreversibly diverted, and a return to the homeland would not be possible for decades. Nevertheless, the drama of their Great Escape would be indelibly remembered by the escapees as a life-altering event.

The Great Baltic Escape (or as it is referred to in Estonian, “Suurpõgenemine”) was



commemorated this past September in several countries. An all-day “Suurpõgenemine 1944 ja meie” conference was held on September 19 in Tallinn at the parliament convention centre. A summary of that conference’s presentations and forums was presented in Eesti Elu’s September 23 edition.

This past July, the BaltHerNet (Baltic Heritage Network) summer school in Hiiumaa featured several presentations on the archival research and exhibitions of the Great Escape. One of the presentations was by Dr Mirja Arnshav, a Research Coordinator at the National (Swedish) Maritime Museum. Dr Arnshav’s interest in the Great Escape and her ongoing research is fascinating and noteworthy.

Dr Arnshav’s personal connection to the Great Escape can be traced back several years to a serendipitous encounter that she had with what turned out to be the wreckage of a small escapee boat. Over the years, Arnshav spent her summer holidays on the Swedish island of Gotland, and during those sojourns,



she realised an interest in history, the sea and boats. Old boats are seemingly everywhere on the shores of Gotland, as there is a tradition of leaving boats to disintegrate by the sea after reaching the end of their service. However, while strolling along the shores during one of her visits to Gotland she noticed a boat, unlike the other abandoned boats due to its construction. Based on her growing maritime knowledge, she suspected the boat was built in eastern Europe. Subsequently, an elderly local confirmed that the boat had been beached and abandoned by Estonian escapees in 1944. Arnshav’s curiosity about the boat revealed that the maritime heritage agencies did not list such refugee boats. Although Arnshav does not have family roots in Baltic escapees, she felt that the legacy and stories represented by such escapee boat wrecks were important and worthy of research and documentation.

Arnshav’s formal research into refugee boats began with her PhD thesis at Stockholm University in 2017. Her extensive study of the refugee boats for her 2020 dissertation has been documented in a book entitled “De Sma batarna och den stora flykten” (The small boats and the Great Escape).

The scope of Arnshav’s research work was to seek and identify as many Baltic escapee boats as possible that still remain on Sweden’s shores and to document their condition. This research is not only an archaeology of the escape and its aftermath based on these escapee boats. The forsaken boats also quietly evoke stories, images and memories of those escapees who stepped out of those

boats in 1944 onto Swedish shores.

Arnshav’s research examined 34 boats confirmed as Baltic escapee boats. They are located on several shores, on Swedish islands and the mainland and are ageing in varying degrees of degradation.

In her role as Research Coordinator at the National Maritime Museum, Arnshav commenced a second and broader research project on “The Materiality of the Great Escape”. The three-year project investigated, documented and archived hundreds of essential and cherished items brought along by the escapees on their boats. In addition to the collection of items, interviews were held with several of the 1944 escapees or their descendants - all of which were compiled into a compendium for the museum. A book on this research, “Foremal pa flykt” ((Personal) Objects of the Escape), has also been published. Exhibitions, public lectures and school education programs have been organised to share the research results and the stories of the escapees. This past June, many Estonian diasporas in Sweden were in attendance at the Maritime Museum forum, where Arnshav’s book was presented along with various panel discussions. Dr Arnshav’s research work and the two books were originally written in Swedish. There is interest in having the works translated into English and Estonian. A recent Estonian TV news clip of Dr Arnshav and her research can be viewed in clip number 2: “Mis on teisel pool vet”.



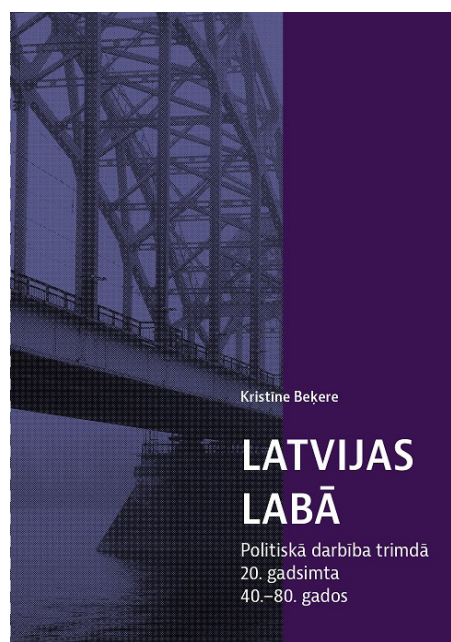
This research work and interest in the Great Escape is timely, recognising that the 80th anniversary of the 1994 Escape will be commemorated in 2024. Steps are being taken to formally acknowledge September 19 as the Day of Remembrance of the Great (Baltic) Escape. In leading up to the 80th anniversary, there may be interest in preserving at least a couple of the escapee boats on the Swedish shores and to erect suitable plaques at those sites, inscribed with the historical context and a recounting of the Great Escape. Such memorial sites on Swedish shores might be a fitting complement to the Puise, Estonia statue “Minna et taha, kuid jääda et saa” which commemorates the Great Escape departure from the shores of Estonia.

Toomas Eichenbaum

First published in *Eesti Elu/Estonian Life*

BOOK ON LATVIAN DIASPORA POLITICAL ACTIVITIES PUBLISHED

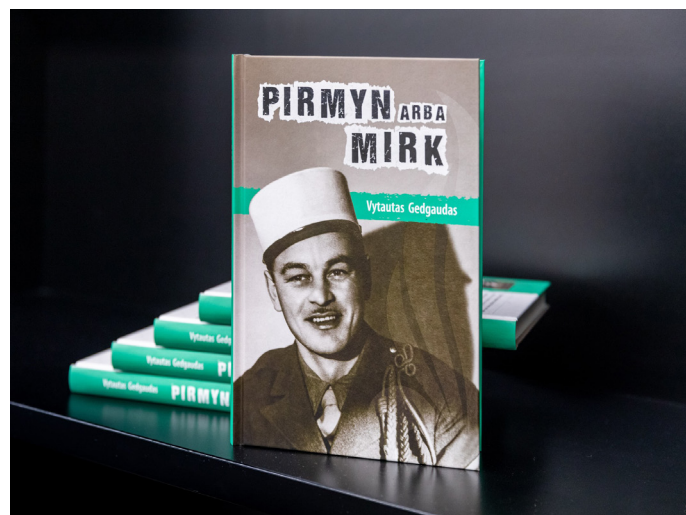
At the end of 2022, the Academic Publishing House of the University of Latvia launched the monograph “For Latvia. Political activities in exile, 1940s to 1980s”. The study examines the political activity implemented by Latvians in exile in the host countries, the purpose of which activity was to sustain the idea of the independence of the Republic of Latvia and promote the restoration of Latvian statehood. The author of the monograph is PhD Kristīne Bekere, a researcher at the Latvian Institute of History, University



of Latvia.

Monograph “For Latvia. Political activities in exile, 1940s to 1980s” is dedicated to the efforts of those Latvians, who as refugees were forced to leave Latvia at the end of the Second World War and after the war to settle in their host countries in Europe, both American continents or Australia. Despite the illegal nature of the occupation and later annexation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia by the USSR in 1940, even after the end of the Second World War, the territory of Latvia remained part of the USSR. In these conditions, it was the Latvians in the Western countries who, with various methods, kept alive the idea of the independence of the Republic of Latvia and the hope that independence would one day be restored.

The book describes the formation of Latvian exile communities after the Second World War, the organisation and the first political activities in the displaced persons camps in Germany. Analysed are the main types of political activity later in the home countries - how exiles spread information about the Baltic countries with the help of various media or by holding public events. The use of holidays and commemorative days in creating a public narrative about the Baltic States in their home countries is highlighted separately. The following chapters highlight the main trends in the political activity of exiles: involvement in the work of various existing anti-communist movements and organisations in the 1950s and 1960s and the invigoration and expansion of activity internationally from the beginning of the 1970s to the beginning of the Third Awakening processes in Baltic states in the late 1980s. Theoretical questions are also outlined - the various possible designations of Latvians scattered around the world after the Second World War and the possibilities of the political activity of



exiles as an ethnic interest group in their home countries. The book also includes a detailed overview of the sources of the history of exile, their status and their availability in archives in different countries.

FORWARD, OR DIE

On October 19, Vytautas Gedgaudas’s book, *Pirmyn arba mirk* (Forward, or Die), was presented at the National Library of Lithuania.

Jolanta Mažylė, Associate Professor of the Centre for Journalism and Media Studies at Vilnius University and the winner of the Gedgaudas Prize, is to blame that the articles written by a long-time editor-in-chief of the Lithuanian-American newspaper, *Dirva*, the only Lithuanian accredited to the Paris Peace Conference and the only Lithuanian journalist who wrote about the Nuremberg Trials for the Lithuanian American press, finally made into a book. The book’s author has managed to preserve an exceptional testimony of WWII, which will find its place among the memoirs of Lithuanian soldiers who served in foreign armies.

The book consists of three parts. The first and second parts contain Gedgaudas’s texts about the Foreign Legion in which he served during WWII. Mažylė believes that the third part of the book, which contains Gedgaudas’s articles published in Lithuanian American press after he immigrated to the United States of America, will be a revelation not only for readers but also for scholars of journalism and cultural history. The book is illustrated with photographs taken by Gedgaudas himself.

A HOLLYWOOD STAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY



The release of an autobiographical book, *Consider Your Ass Kissed*, is the latest achievement of Lithuanian American Hollywood star Ruta Lee. In the book, she talks about her life and rich career, as well as her encounters and friendships with movie stars.

For ten years, Ruta Lee had harboured the idea of putting her memories in the pages of a book. “People have told me that I have so many interesting stories. We all like gossip, at least a little gossip, but I never had the patience to sit down and do it,” the actress, who was finally persuaded to write a book by a good friend, acknowledged.

Reading the last draft of her memoirs, Ruta Lee said that she regretted not having talked more about her grandmother and her time in Siberia. “She was deported to Siberia with her husband, whose legs froze during a six-week journey in cattle cars. When they took off his boots at the train station, the skin peeled off with them—gangrene had set in,” Ruta Lee said.

In her book, the Hollywood celebrity also talks about the phone call to Nikita Khrushchev. “After 12 years of trying to get my grandmother out of the Soviet Union legally, I had to do something very dramatic. And I succeeded. After this adventure, when my grandma finally arrived here — at that time there were no closed exits from the planes leading to the airport — this tiny 95-year-old woman fell to her knees, kissed the ground, and said in Lithuanian “Labas, Amerika [Hello, America],” the actress remembered the first minutes of her grandma in the USA.

The actress has made a spectacular career in Hollywood and has long been considered one of the brightest movie stars. However, one only has to look at her performance in “Marjorie Morningstar” or in the series “Perry Mason,” “Maverick”, and other projects from the golden age of television that made her a Hollywood star.

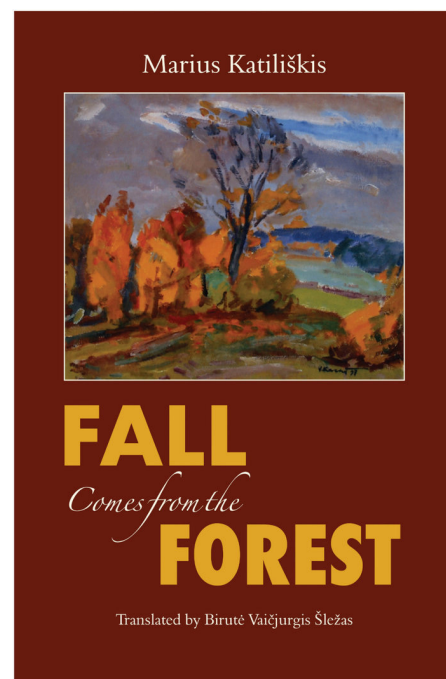
NEW TRANSLATION OF A CLASSIC OF LITHUANIAN LITERATURE

This fall, the Pica Pica Press publishing house, located in Flossmoor, IL, USA, was pleased to announce for the first time in English, a release of a classic of Lithuanian literature, *Fall Comes from the Forest* (Miškais ateina ruduo) by Marius Katiliškis, translated by Birutė Šležas-Vaičiūrgis.

Written in exile in 1957, the novel is a love letter to the land Katiliškis left behind. Set in the deep woods and bogs of northern Lithuania in the period between the two World Wars, this is the tragic story of a young man struggling to find a place for himself in the world. In the winter, Tilius and his friend Petras work as lumberjacks, but as the spring thaws arrive, Tilius loses his chance at a post as a border guard when he gets into a brawl. So instead, he accepts a job as a hired hand at the nearby Doveika farm. Caught between his love for the innocent young Agnė and the seductions of his mistress Monika, Tilius is buffeted by circumstances and his confusing and sometimes uncontrollable emotions.

With the lame herdsman Laurynas keeping guard, the story flows through the seasons to its inevitable conclusion.

Kirkus Reviews found the fresh language of the book consistently compelling. Violeta Kelertas, an Affiliate Professor at the University of Washington, noted, “No other writer has captured such a vivid and detailed picture of independent Lithuania between the wars, revealing both the complications of its daily life, the beauty of its nature, and the tortured reality of those striving to realize their hopes and dreams. Loved by generations of native speakers, the book makes for delicious reading that no one will be tempted to put down. Move over, John Steinbeck of *East of Eden* fame.”



TWO EXHIBITIONS DEDICATED TO LITHUANIAN ÉMIGRÉ DISSIDENTS

For the first time, the life and work of the theatre director, laureate of the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts and dissident Jonas Jurašas were presented in such detail at the exhibition organised by the National Library of Lithuania. The exhibition “Jonas Jurašas. The Price of Being” presented over fifty Jurašas’s plays staged during the Soviet era in Lithuania and Russia, on the stages of the Western world (USA, Canada, Germany, Belgium and Japan), and in Lithuania after the restoration of independence revealing the personality of the creator and the importance of his works.

The exhibition has already been exhibited at the National Kaunas Drama Theatre, where Jurašas has received great recognition and experienced the love of the Lithuanian people and faced tragic moments.



The Jurašas’s exhibition ran from September 6 to October 30.

Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis



The exhibition displayed the costume of the famous Barбора Radvilaitė from the Jurašas's play of the same title.

Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis

Jurašas's work in Vilnius theatres has a special place. However, the performance "Barбора Radvilaitė" is the most famous of all. This April marked the fiftieth anniversary of its legendary performance, which determined the director's further life. On September 9, 1972, the tattered and censored "Barbara Radvilaitė" premiere took place without the director's presence, without mentioning his name. Today, this play is not only a symbol of Jurašas's refusal to collaborate with the Soviet censorship, his resistance to the system, and his struggle for a free Lithuania; it is also a work that the country's theatre critics have acknowledged as the most outstanding Lithuanian performance of the 20th century.

The exhibition was prepared by curator Liucija Armonaitė, exhibition architects Ona Vėliūtė, Saulius Valius, artists Ona Vėliūtė and Jūratė Šatūnė.



The exhibition was well attended by the students.

Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis

The exhibition "The Sign of Tomas Venclova" exhibited at the National Library of Lithuania from September 13 to November 6, invited to take a fresh look at Tomas Venclova (b. 1937), a well-known poet, translator, literary researcher, professor, dissident and public figure.

The exhibition opened up different stages of Venclova's life, spheres of activity, hobbies, friendships, and works. Looking back to the very origins of poet's rich and meaningful life, the exhibition presented poems and a manuscript written by Venclova in his childhood, photographs testifying to his close relationship with the world of books from his early days, and his first books.



Many of the exhibits were books from Venclova's personal library housed at the National Library of Lithuania.

Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis

The exhibition included Venclova's collection of poems *Kalbos ženklas* [The Sign of Language, 1972] published fifty years ago, which was the poet's remarkable public debut and left a deep imprint on Lithuanian poetry of that time. This book also inspired the title of the exhibition. Other books of Venclova's poetry and their translations into various languages were also on display.

The exhibition presented Venclova as one of the first propagators of semiotic ideas in Lithuania, who discovered in semiotics the possibility of protecting free thought from the dull Soviet ideology. The exhibits also reminded us that after his arrival in the USA, Venclova, as a representative of the Lithuanian Helsinki Group, communicated with Lithuanian diaspora figures and other Soviet dissidents, participated in meetings, spoke out about human rights violations,

strengthened existing and created new links with democratic movements in the West.

The exhibition also offered a glimpse of Venclova's passion for travel as a freedom seeker and citizen of the world. His travels have ranged from Ethiopia, India and China to Australia and Ecuador.

The poet and the National Library of Lithuania have a long-standing friendship, which began at the dawn of Lithuania's independence. From the early 1990s, Venclova systematically began sending his published works to the Library.

THE FIRST YEAR OF ESTOCAST WAS A SUCCESS

Estonian Music Week, VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), and Eesti Elu (Estonian Life) newspaper have had growing success with their joint venture EstoCast, a biweekly podcast. If you've ever wanted to know the latest Estonian books, music, art, history, science, and other key news and cultural topics but in a convenient on-the-go format, EstoCast is perfect for you. EstoCast is also ideal for those simply curious about any of the above topics and searching for something fresh, exciting, inspiring, and educational to listen to. EstoCast alternates between English and Estonian every other episode so that there's something for everyone; those wanting to learn or practice either language also have the perfect chance for that!

Since our introduction in the last newsletter, EstoCast has come a long way and has made considerable strides within the podcast world. We've steadily gained listeners with every episode and expanded our horizons in terms of the topics we cover and our audience base, finding our niche. EstoCast has 17 episodes in both languages, spanning topics from literature to music and the latest cultural news and hottest happenings. Newer episodes also touch upon topics such as politics, technology, and stories of people in our diaspora Estonian communities in Canada and worldwide. We've had some tantalizing and exciting guests visit our studio in the past couple of months, such as famed Estonian writer Leelo Tungal



who gave us a peek into the inner world and mind of an author, catching up on the latest in the tech world with project manager at Tehnopol Science and Business Park, Tallinn Maarika Merirand, and an in depth tour of the ins and outs of diplomacy by former Estonian Ambassador to Canada Toomas Lukk. There's never a dull moment with EstoCast; tune in and check us out!

A good portion of our listener base is located in Canada, with Estonia, the United Kingdom and the United States following that. We've even gained listeners in all corners of the earth, such as Spain, Mexico, and Africa! Topping the charts as the current most popular episode is Chef Paul Lillakas' Path to Becoming a TV chef, followed by "An Interview with a Bookworm - a discussion with VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada chief archivist Piret Noorhani," "An Interview with Ruslan and Terje Trochynskyi of Svjata Vatra," and a discussion with Alan Teder on translation and the world of literature at large. We're surely and steadily gaining ground in the vast sea of podcasts and evolving to become better than ever before.

Season 2 of EstoCast will be premiering shortly in January, with a slew of thrilling new guests lined up and captivating topics to capture the attention of all listeners, big and small, young and old, so stay tuned; you won't want to miss what's in store in the future! Hosts Vincent Teetsov and Kati Kiilaspea, along with occasional guest hosts, will continue to take you through the exciting world of Estonian culture at large. You can find EstoCast here on major streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music, as well as at our website: <https://estocast.buzzsprout.com/> Happy listening!

VEMU/ESTONIAN MUSEUM CANADA'S KONRAD MÄGI PAINTING BECAME CENTREPIECE OF EXHIBIT

An art exhibit titled "Konrad Mägi. Unseen Paintings" could be viewed at the Mikkeli museum in Tallinn throughout August and September. The exhibition introduced artworks that the public had never seen from almost all of the artist's creative periods, allowing for a further understanding of Mägi's legacy. The pieces came from Estonian and Swedish private collections as well as from VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada. In addition, the album "Konrad Mägi" detailing the artist's life and all of his surviving works was launched alongside the exhibition's opening.

The painting belonging to VEMU has been brought to Estonia for five years at the initiative of the Konrad Mägi Foundation to be cleaned, restored, and introduced to researchers and the public. The piece is from one of the most valuable Konrad Mägi periods, the Saaremaa period (1912-1913) and depicts the Bay of Abaja in Kihelkonna. The piece belonged to Laine Pant's family, who brought it along when they fled Estonia. The piece travelled through Germany to Toronto, where it hung in Laine Pant's apartment for many years.

Ingrid Kütt, a relative of Laine Pant living in Toronto, recalls: "Laine told me that Mägi's painting had been bought from Pallas art studio in Tartu. When? For what amount? Who was the real purchaser? I imagine that the purchaser was likely Laine's father Hans Silbergleich (Ants Silvere) since he was likely the only one who would have had the finances - he was the owner of Livonia brewery. It's a little hard to believe that Laine herself would have been able to purchase the artwork as a 30-year-old, but you never know. Laine fled to Canada through Germany and the painting came along with



her and her sister, rolled up along with other works (Ants Laikmaa, Eduard Viiralt, Erich Pehap). Laine and her older sister Aino Assor (Asor), also brought silver spoons and other cutlery with them and were surprised that they didn't go missing from their open backpacks during train journeys. Laine had a true appreciation for art. When leaving Germany, she spent her last Reichsmarks buying antiques since a currency change was about to take place, and there was no use for German money in Canada anyway." Laine Pant gifted the painting along with her personal archive to VEMU. This piece is the most valuable in the VEMU art collection.

The exhibit "Konrad Mägi. Unseen Paintings" was possible due to the partnership of the Konrad Mägi Association and the Art Museum of Estonia at the affiliate location in Kadriorg of the Mikkeli Museum. It was curated by Eero Epner, director of the Konrad Mägi Association and Aleksandra Murre, director of the Mikkeli Museum. The painting belonging to VEMU was the focal piece of the exhibit.

TC 50+2: A TRUE PARTY FOR THE AGES

Only the biggest and best parties last for days and are multi-faceted - you get





some good food, have great music and entertainment, and have an amazing time with friends and family. Tartu College's birthday "week" in Toronto had all of this and much more, bringing together friends and acquaintances over the course of a fantastic series of events over five days, lasting from September 21st to the 25th. The festivities brought stellar local artistic guests and renowned Estonian musicians, something you'll be able to read more about further in the article. Unfortunately, during two long years in the heart of Covid, Tartu College's 50th had to be celebrated through Zoom, with no one being able to come together physically. But now, this pillar of the Estonian-Canadian and worldwide diaspora community, a great vision of architect Elmar Tampõld, was able to have a proper celebration in appreciation of its continuing contribution to keeping the Estonian spirit alive and thriving over 50 years later.

The fantastic lineup of festivities kicked off on September 21st with local "street-jazz" band Big Smoke Brass turning up the heat at the barbecue party for Tartu College students, family and friends. Jazzy and rhythmic covers of modern, well-known pop songs brought smiles to the faces of the crowd and had everyone grooving along. While all of this was going on, a modern version of the London double-decker buses pulled up and the Shuffle Demons, local Toronto funk masters who have also visited Estonia twice during their 38-year career, are piling onto the open second level and soon begin to wow curious onlookers and partiers with a set of groovy tunes. When Estonian legends and monsters of funk Lexsoul Dancemachine started their set atop the bus in matching, eye-catching burgundy tracksuits, the crowd went wild, shaking their hips and showing their best dance

moves to soaring melodies and catchy rhythms. Along with a few lucky contest winners who could catch a ride with the bands on the bus, the Shuffle Demons and Lexsoul set out on a night of taking over Toronto, with three pop-up concerts in total around downtown. What a

kickoff night to the celebrations it was.

The VEMU-run Estonian Music Week-hosted luncheon on September 22 brought together top music industry professionals from Toronto and offered them a window into Estonian music of the past and present. Speakers included Vaiko Eplik, Henrik Ehte and Robert Linna from Estonia, moderated by Sebastian Buccioni. The talk concluded with a survey of Estonian festivals, conference and music service organisation. EMW looks forward to welcoming many participants back to the 2023 festival as delegates.

The celebrations moved to Hamilton, ON, for the evening of September 23. The evening, entitled "Funk at the Factory", brought together Toronto, Hamilton and Tallinn-based artists from a wide range of disciplines at the historic Cotton Factory hosted by Adrian Bernard. The band Aleef & Friends was kicking off the evening with their signature blend of jazz fusion. Taking the energy to the next level, a group of four professional dancers took to the floor in a friendly dance battle. Raoul Wilke, Janessa Pudwell and Lacy C used every street dance style in the book to answer the acrobatic feats of breakdancer Ali Muhammad while DJ B Bad kept the music flowing. The clear winner, though, was the audience, and they were rewarded again with a characteristically high-energy performance from Lexsoul

Dancemachine to close the night. As all of this unfolded, so too did Curtia Wright's large-scale artwork, with flowing brushstrokes and rich, eye-catching colours. Audience members were treated to thirst-quenching seltzers and craft beers by Clifford Brewing and the satisfying cuisine of the Flyin G'nosh Food Truck. Truly a feast for all the senses.

But if you've already had two nights of phenomenal parties, the third night has to turn up the heat; as the saying goes: "third times the charm." September 23rd at the Axis Club in Toronto was a funky, soulful get-down in every way; the crowd was teeming with energy throughout the night. DJ Henrik Ehte (Estonia) created a mellow atmosphere, followed by host for the night and famed multi-instrumentalist and composer Vaiko Eplik (Estonia) stepping up for a sentimental and touching short set of songs, among them tunes by Peeter and Olaf Kopvillem, well known and appreciated within the local Estonian community. Tartu College's president Jaan Meri shared a heartfelt birthday wish to Tartu College, and a teaser for Kaisa Pitsi's film "Meie Tartu" was shown to gather even more interest for the premiere of the film on Sunday. Both lead sponsor Northern Birch Credit Union's president Anita Saar and major funder Estonian Foundation of Canada's president Eva Varangu extended best birthday wishes to Tartu College as well. It's safe to say that both the Shuffle Demons and Lexsoul Dancemachine brought the house down with their funky beats and captivating melodies, the energy onstage was thoroughly mirrored within the crowd and an absolutely amazing night was the result.



Following three nights of hard partying, the afternoon of September 24th offered a formal get-together to appreciate the mark that Tartu College has left fully, and its lasting and continual impact on the livelihood of Estonian-Canadian diaspora communities. Famed Estonian textile artist Anu Raud presented a Dr. Vello Soots memorial lecture on the topic of “Thread of Thought - Cultural Thought” and the chief archivist of VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada Piret Noorhane had a touching speech and officially opened the “Our Tartu: 50 Years of Tartu College” exhibit. Several heartfelt birthday wishes were shared by guests, including Tartu College president Jaan Meri, the new Estonian ambassador to Canada Margus Rava, Estonian honorary consul general in Toronto Laas Leivat, KESKUS project lead Ellen Valter and many more. Closing remarks were presented by Tartu College board vice-president and president of the board of the Chair of Estonian Studies University of Toronto Peeter Einola. Of course, an Estonian event would not be complete without pirukad, kringel and coffee; many thanks to Ülle Veltmann catering for providing a delicious, traditional buffet.

And so the last day of the festivities had come around, the September 25th premiere of the long-awaited Tartu College documentary film “Our Tartu” directed by Kaisa Pitsi. The film was a true heartfelt and poignant testament to this monument that represents not only a second home and heart of Estonian culture to our Toronto Estonian community but also to diaspora Estonian communities at large. The movie’s focus was the idea of keeping together in these changing times and how Tartu College continually acts as an anchor for our community. That was one of the aspects that touched the audience most, as was heard from their post-screening comments. A more fitting end to the festivities would not have been possible, leaving us all with the idea that Tartu College is truly “our Tartu,” our cultural hub and home.

We would like to extend a huge thanks to Tartu College, VEMU, Estonian Music Week, Koger Valuations Inc., the Cotton Factory, the Estonian



Ministry of Education and Research, Northern Birch Credit Union and Estonian Foundation of Canada; without all of your support this fantastic series of events would not have been possible. A heartfelt thank you to all of the performers and artists, especially Lexsoul Dancemachine, Vaiko Eplik, and the Shuffle Demons, who made the festivities truly special and unique. Special thanks go out to Laani Teetsov, who did a stellar job with designs for TC 50+2 celebrations as well as for the “Our Tartu” exhibit (her first standalone job of the kind) and for the film credits. Thank you to Estonian Music Week’s executive and artistic director, Sebastian Buccioni; without you the musical experience would not have been as unique and superb as it was. Thank you Tartu College’s general manager Linda Karuks, your continual work and effort keeps “our Tartu” running as smoothly

as it does. And a very big thank you to VEMU/Estonian Museum Canada chief archivist and Estonian Music Week’s festival director Piret Noorhane, your vision and tireless work is what keeps our culture here alive, you are the embodiment of “our Tartu’s” cultural spirit. And last but not least, thank you to all of our hard-working volunteers, you helped all of the festivities run smoothly. See you soon at our upcoming events!

Kati Kiilaspea and Sebastian Buccioni

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VEMU EVENTS FALL 2022

On September 6th, Latvian Member of Parliament Veiko Spolitis presented a lecture titled “Russian war in Ukraine, the Baltic States in transformative Northern Europe & European Union”.



From right: President Alar Karis, Estonian Ambassador to Canada Margus Rava, Indrek Lõo with his son.

Photo. Kerly Ilves

Veiko Spolitis visited Canada as a guest of the Muskoka Forest University.

The Estonian Institute of Historical Memory's exhibit "Ukraine in 20th century crises" was opened on Tartu College's front wall on September 16th. The exhibition came to Canada thanks to the president of the Central and Eastern European Council in Canada and journalist and political scientist Marcus Kolga. The president of the Toronto branch of the Ukrainian-Canadian Congress Peter Schturyyn spoke at the exhibit opening.

On September 27th, Jüri Allik, Professor of Experimental Psychology at the University of Tartu and Member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, presented a lecture on "The Ins and Outs of Estonian Psychology." The lecture was inspired by his recently published book from the University of Tartu Press, introducing the history of psychology.

A culturally themed Jane's Walk, directed by Peeter Einola, took place on October 16th. It featured a tour of the University of Toronto's campus, bringing together those who gathered on a search for the academic footprints of Estonians in downtown Toronto.

On October 30th, a memorial event for the longtime principal of the Estonian Supplementary Schools in Toronto, Edgar Marten, took place. Edgar Marten passed away in 2020 at the age of 100. Since the pandemic prevented the community from paying their respects, they could now gather to pay their respects. Among other performers were Mr Marten's family members, colleagues and students and St. Peter's Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church's pastor Mart Salumäe. Attendees could view archival recordings of Mr Marten's recollections and an exhibit dedicated to him. VEMU's chief archivist, Piret Noorhani and the Estonian Literary Museum's senior researcher Piret Voolaid presented an overview of the school lore collection campaign. The event took place in partnership with



Edgar Marten's family members and on the initiative of his daughter Reet Marten Sehr.

VEMU's Estonian book club started their new season on November 2nd. The topic of discussion was Jaan Kross' book "Third Mountains" ("Kolmandad mäed").

Roomer Tarajev from the Tartu municipal government presented a lecture on the topic of "Smart City Tartu - how a city has built co-creative innovation ecosystem for private-public-partnership?" on November 8th.

November 13th was the second screening of Kaisa Pitsi and VEMU's documentary film "Our Tartu: 50 Years of Tartu College." Following the screening, a heartfelt and warm discussion ensued.

On November 16th, guests Tõnis Tärna and Peeter Väljas from the National Archives of Estonia stepped up to present lectures. The former spoke of a co-creation project to bring historical county court documents to interested parties, and the latter spoke of the organisation of personal archives, bringing up Lennart Meri and Vello Salo's archives as an example.

Along with the Chair of Estonian Studies University of Toronto, the 103rd anniversary of the Estonian-language University of Tartu was celebrated on November 27th. Professor Andres Kasekamp spoke on the topic of the current situation in Ukraine.

VISITING VEMU/ESTONIAN MUSEUM CANADA

After travel restrictions that lasted a couple of years, active travel between Canada and Estonia has been restored and many interesting guests have visited the Toronto Estonian community and found their way to VEMU.

At the beginning of November, the Ambassador at Large for Global Estonians at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Marin Mõttus, along with advisor Keit Spiegel, visited Toronto. Along with them were the Head of the Compatriots Service at the Integration Foundation Kaire Cocker, and the Coordinator of Estonian Studies Abroad at the Estonian Institute, Heidi Eskor. Over the course of several meetings and visits, ongoing activities of individuals and organisations were introduced to one another, and partnership opportunities were discussed.

As November drew to a close, the President of Estonia Alar Karis visited Toronto. An open round table discussion and meeting with representatives of Estonian organisations took place at Tartu College. The President was also familiarised with VEMU's ongoing activities and collections.

Over the course of November, Peeter Väljas and Tõnis Tärna, helpers from the National Archives of Estonia, aided with organising VEMU's collections. This reciprocal partnership is not only supported by VEMU and the National Archives but also by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.